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6 May 1975

DCI BRIEFING FOR  
MAY 6 SRG MEETING

THE SOVIET NAVY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

Introduction

- I. The Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean has grown slowly but steadily since 1968, and has helped Moscow increase its influence in that part of the world.
  - A. The force the Soviets have deployed in the Indian Ocean, however, has been small in comparison to those deployed elsewhere.
  - B. Moreover, with a few notable exceptions, the ships have been older and less capable ones.

Composition of the Soviet Force

- II. Over the years, the composition of the Soviet Indian Ocean force has varied considerably.
  - A. In 1974 the "typical" deployment included six surface warships, and usually a diesel submarine and seven auxiliary support ships.

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The "typical" force included one gun-armed destroyer, two destroyer escorts, two minesweepers and an amphibious ship.

The reinforced contingent consisted of a gun-armed cruiser, a surface-to-air missile equipped destroyer, four destroyer escorts, four minesweepers, two amphibious ships, two diesel submarines, and seven auxiliaries.

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B. Last month, on the other hand, the combatant contingent was double its "normal" size. The annual rotation of the force took place, but the "relieved" units stayed around for the Soviet naval exercise "OKEAN-75."

1. The capabilities of the force were further increased during the exercise by two ASW aircraft flying from Somalia, and a pair of intelligence collection transports from Aden. Two long range reconnaissance aircraft also operated from the USSR.

IL-38

AN-12

TU-95

2. About half of the warships are now on their way back to the USSR. The ASW and reconnaissance aircraft have already left the area.

C. The Indian Ocean force generally spends a large portion of its time at anchor or in port visits, mostly in the northwestern reaches of the ocean.

1. Since 1969, there has been an overall increase in the number of port calls, although the number of countries visited annually has decreased.

2. Measured in terms of "ship days," however,

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the Soviet activity has increased steadily -- from about 1,000 days in 1968 to over 9,000 in 1974.

3. About one-third of the activity in the past three years has been associated with harbor clearing operations in Bangladesh, and mine-sweeping in the Gulf of Suez. *Both have now terminated.*
- D. The Soviet warships and submarines sent to the Indian Ocean normally come from the Pacific Fleet, which is also the primary source for logistic support.
  1. Some have come from the western fleets, however; in fact, about one-fourth have been units transferring to the Pacific from the western fleets.
- E. The Pacific forces are now being modernized, and since early 1974 the Indian Ocean force has included more modern anticarrier and anti-submarine units than formerly.
- F. As for future Soviet naval activity in the Indian Ocean, we believe that growth will be steady over the long term, leading to a continuously deployed force of, say, 10-12 combatants by 1977.

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1. Moscow would probably consider such a measured approach as consistent with a generally growing -- and accepted -- Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean countries.
2. Further increases in the US Indian Ocean presence could result in a somewhat more rapid buildup in the Soviet force. The Soviets have clearly shown a sensitivity to US activity, and this will be one of the factors in their determination of Indian Ocean requirements.
  - a. Admiral Gorshkov would probably point to the expansion of Diego Garcia, along with the stepped up pace of US carrier deployments, as evidence of US intentions to maintain a strong presence in the area.

Soviet Support Facilities

III. Until late 1972, the Indian Ocean force was supported almost exclusively by "floating bases" -- collections of auxiliary ships -- anchored in international waters.

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Support from the Berbera facility could be especially useful if the Soviet forces became engaged in combat, because of the long distance to existing facilities in the USSR.

There are significant differences between the Berbera facility and those used for fixed or mobile coastal defense missiles, surface-to-air missiles, ground force surface-to-surface missiles, and all ballistic missiles. The Berbera installation has also been compared with support facilities provided by the Soviets to countries receiving Soviet missiles for local naval and air defense forces. The checkout and assembly building is smaller in these cases and the facilities, as a whole, less adequate. Somalia does not have naval missiles, and there are no surface-to-air missiles in the Berbera area at this time.

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- A. In mid-1972, however, the Soviets acquired the use of facilities in the small port of Berbera, in Somalia. These have been expanded, and the harbor is now used for routine ship maintenance and crew rest, making Berbera a key element in the support of Indian Ocean operations.
1. There are no ship repair facilities ashore, but tenders provide the same limited services in port as they did at anchor. (The anchorages are still used, too.)
  2. There is also a naval communications facility near Berbera, and barracks for Soviet personnel.
- B. There has been another Soviet construction project under way since mid-1973 in Berbera. We believe it is intended as a cruise missile handling and storage facility for the Indian Ocean force, and a general weapons storage area as well. It could be operational by mid-1975.
1. It closely resembles cruise missile support sites at naval bases in the USSR. The fuel storage area, in particular, can be directly associated with cruise missiles.

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It could handle surface-to-air missiles or torpedoes, or coastal defense versions of ship-borne cruise missiles. Contrary to some press reports, it does not appear suitable for the handling of ballistic missiles.



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C. The Berbera installation could increase the readiness of Soviet ships and submarines deployed to the area for extended periods.

1. Now, such forces must rely on cruise-missile facilities at naval bases in the USSR, although they may replace other weapons from limited stocks on naval auxiliary ships.

2. As more missile-equipped units are added to the Pacific Fleet, we expect to see more of them in the Indian Ocean.

D. In addition to the missile facility, the Soviets have recently begun to build a new airfield at Berbera. They have also helped the Somalis improve several other airfields -- and have recently acquired landing rights at them.

1. Work on the new airfield began in November 1974, and it probably will be operational within a year or two. The runway apparently will be capable of handling not only reconnaissance and ASW aircraft, but is near enough to the new cruise missile facility to support naval strike aircraft.

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Support ships could be drawn from the Black Sea and the Pacific on a nearly equal basis.

*after Canal re-opened*

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E. The Soviets also have access to port facilities in several other countries around the Indian Ocean, but these are of lesser importance to them. Their ships frequently visit Umm Qasr and Basra in Iraq, and support vessels and small warships stop at Aden for replenishing. Auxiliary vessels, but not warships, have put in at Singapore.

Impact of Opening the Suez Canal

IV. The opening of the Suez Canal will significantly increase Moscow's capability to reinforce its naval units in the Indian Ocean quickly, but will not, in itself, lead to a significant change in the Soviet presence.

- A. If the Soviets could use the canal, naval access to the important Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea area would be easier and more timely, especially in times of crisis.
- B. Logistic support of ships in the Indian Ocean would also be easier, with less dependence on littoral countries. Interfleet transfers and deliveries of military aid would also be easier.
- C. A few warships from the Mediterranean Squadron

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In March 1971, Dobrynin sounded out Secretary Rogers about a joint declaration that the Indian Ocean should be "free of military bases and fleet concentrations." When Ambassador Beam subsequently raised the matter with Gromyko, the latter professed ignorance (although he made the proper noises). Apart from this, there are only a few leadership references endorsing India's contention that the Indian Ocean should be a "zone of peace" free of foreign bases.

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probably would be sent to the Indian Ocean once the canal opens.

1. Nevertheless, the Pacific Fleet would still be the chief source of supply for surface combatants and the only source for submarines for the Indian Ocean, because of the higher priority of Soviet naval operations in the Mediterranean and the need to maintain a strategic reserve in the Black Sea.
- D. The USSR probably recognizes that the canal is subject to closure in a crisis, and would not wish to be caught with a substantial number of units on the wrong end. In considering this contingency, Moscow would almost certainly give priority to its Mediterranean Squadron.
- E. The Soviets have not shown real interest in naval limitations in the Indian Ocean. They would probably want to appear responsive to any US proposal, but would seek to link it to their own Asian collective security idea. If negotiations actually came to pass, they would strongly resist exempting SSBNs from limitation, and would put forward geographic definitions which excluded Somalia.

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*Sri Lanka's*  
India is also strongly pushing ~~the~~ "zone of peace"  
concept for the Indian Ocean.



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Attitudes of Littoral States

V. The states bordering the Indian Ocean are generally opposed to any substantial great power presence.

A. India and Iran -- who have the strongest naval forces -- both believe that great power presence produces a rivalry which threatens regional stability.

1. India is the most outspoken, and is firmly opposed to US plans to expand its facilities on Diego Garcia. New Delhi opposes both US and Soviet permanent facilities in the area, and treats all foreign requests

for port calls on a case-by-case basis. *India is also strongly pushing for a "zone of peace" concept for the Indian Ocean.*

2. Iran is also against a great power naval presence in the area, although the Shah supports US efforts to balance the presence of the USSR. He has publicly endorsed US efforts to expand Diego Garcia. As the Shah's own naval strength increases, however, he is likely to seek a reduced US presence.

3. Continued <sup>U.S.</sup> use of Bahrain, the principal facility supporting the small US Navy force permanently stationed in the Indian Ocean area, is becoming increasingly dubious. The

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Amir generally favors a US presence in the Persian Gulf, but might have to bow to domestic opposition. Recent reports indicate that the Shah of Iran may also pressure him, especially if Iraq should agree to exclude the Soviets from its ports.

B. The other states of the area also have taken positions which reflect their general political orientation.

1. Oman and Pakistan continue to welcome US presence as a counterbalance to that of the USSR. The Sultan of Oman has even endorsed US plans for expanding Diego Garcia, and has been receptive to possible US use of Masirah.
2. South Yemen, on the other hand, opposes the presence of "imperialist" powers in the Indian Ocean, but welcomes the USSR.
3. Indonesia has reacted mildly, but its public statements have been against any permanent great power influence.
4. Singapore is probably more concerned about the economic benefits from both US and Soviet naval activity than about political

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or security implications of great power presence.

5. Thailand will continue to be reluctant to allow the US to use Thai facilities in support of Indian Ocean activities.
6. The Australian government favors a neutralized Indian Ocean. It is strongly opposed to our plans for Diego Garcia on the grounds that the USSR will be encouraged thereby to enlarge its own presence.

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	<u>Pacific Fleet</u>		<u>Typical Indian Ocean Force</u>	<u>Typical Mediterranean Force</u>
	<u>Total Inventory</u>	<u>Normally Available*</u>		
<u>Surface Ships</u>				
Cruisers	8	4	-	2
Destroyers	23	12	1	5
Escorts	27	13	2	5
Ocean-going Minesweepers	57	28	2	2
Amphibious ships	<u>15</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
Total	130	65	6	16
<u>Submarines</u>				
Nuclear powered	41	21	-	1
Diesel powered	<u>67</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>14</u>
Total	108	55	1	15

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*\*On the average, about 50% of the total inventory is ready for operations within a day or two (75-80% would be ready within 60 days). Figures for individual classes would vary from day to day.*

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